

27 Aug 02 Employee Information Exchange – Understanding Your Future

27 Aug 0900 Session:

Q1. Question. I am currently a CSRS employee....and want to take another government position....would I remain a CSRS employee, or would the new hiring activity "make" me a FERS employee?

Answer. You would remain a CSRS employee if you did not have a "break in service" of 365 days or more.

If you have a "break in service" that is at least 4 days, you will be given a 6-month opportunity period to transfer to FERS if you so desire.

However----if the new position to which you are being hired is a Temporary appointment (NTE 1 year) or a TERM appointment.....you would no longer be covered by CSRS, because Temp and TERM appointments are excluded from CSRS coverage.

Q2. Question. In addition to the ABC Center, will CPAC or the Garrison provide an additional Benefits person to provide assistance to employees?

Answer: We are working with MEDCOM to get authority to hire an employee on a term or temporary basis to provide benefits assistance to employees. In the future, we will bring a benefits expert from the ABC center TDY for a briefing and question and answer period with employees. We are also planning to install speaker-telephones at several desks in CPAC so that, if needed, CPAC analysts can join and assist employees during conversations with the ABC Center.

Q3. Question. What will be the primary criteria or condition for offering VERA / VSIPs; will employees who work in mission critical positions or who hold special certifications not receive offers? How will operations continue at a place like the Water Treatment Plant after the VERA if people take them?

Answer. Mission accomplishment will be the principal criteria for deciding who gets VERA / VSIPs. There may be a few exceptions depending on future risk assessments; but as of now, there are no exceptions to using mission accomplishment as the decision criteria. Due to mission requirements, VERA / VSIPs may not be offered to Water Plant employees under an in-house/MEO win. However, under a contractor win, Water Plant and other employees qualified for early retirement would probably receive VERA / VSIPs.

Q4. Question. Will DIS shift schedules be adjusted for employees to attend training?

Answer. DIS supervisors will work to accommodate employee schedules to allow attendance at training, where possible.

27 Aug 1300 Session:

Q1. If I receive the VSIP, can I come back to work for the government as a NAF employee and NOT have to repay the VSIP?

Answer. Employee would have to sign the agreement in receiving VSIP and employee would have to repay the VSIP in full if employee were to accept NAF employment or personal services contract.

Q2. If I am Optional Retirement eligible, and do NOT want to retire, and I am separated in the RIF, am I allowed to be placed on PPP?

Answer: If an employee elects not to retire, the employee can register in PPP. An employee can take Discontinued Service Retirement and stay registered in PPP for up to one year.

Q 2.1 If I am "Fully" eligible to retire, and do NOT want to retire, and I am separated in the RIF, am I allowed to be placed on PPP?

Answer: Same as above, if an employee elects not to retire, the employee can register in PPP. An employee can take Discontinued Service Retirement and stay registered in PPP for up to one year.

Q3. Once I leave the government, how long am I allowed to keep my insurance?

Answer: Your enrollment will end, subject to a 31-day extension of coverage, when you separate from service (unless you can retire and continue your enrollment). Your coverage will continue without cost to you for 31 days after your enrollment ends for any reason, except when you cancel it. During that time, you can elect Temporary Continuation of Coverage (TCC) or convert to an individual health benefits contract with your FEHB plan.

Q 3.1 Who do I contact for Federal insurance information?

Answer:

The ABC-Center website: <https://www.abc-c.army.mil> provides information on your question regarding continuation of benefits (health benefits) after leaving the Fed Govt. You can also contact the ABC-C counselors directly via phone if you have specific questions at:
1-877-276-9287

Another good source of information is at the following website: <http://www.opm.gov>
Select Site Index
Select "F" for Federal Employee's Health Benefits
Select FEHB Handbook
Select: Termination, Conversion, and
Temporary Continuation of Coverage

Another valuable resource is the following web site
<http://www.federalhandbooks.com/> where employees can obtain free handbooks on various Federal programs for Federal Employees.

Q 3.2 Whom do I contact for private insurer information?

Answer. Employees should contact private insurers directly.

Q4. Can a WG employee bump into a GS position?

Answer: Yes, as long as they meet the position qualifications (also, see 19 Dec RIF Briefing Q&A - Tab 6 of Employee's Resource Guide Book)

Q5. Is the time allowed to register for PPP calculated in the current milestone schedule?
The law requires that PPP registration must occur 120 days prior to RIF?

Answer: Yes, a PPP registration period of 5 to 7 seven days is calculated in the current milestone schedule.

Q6. If you are separated and received severance pay:

Can you register and remain on PPP for the full allotted time?

Answer: Yes.

Can you receive Maryland Unemployment Insurance payments?

Answer: As USAG employees live in different States (e.g. Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, etc) with different unemployment regulations and benefits, employees should contact the unemployment office in the State and County where they reside.

Q7. If I sign up for VERA/VSIP and the effective date of my separation is a day before I'm eligible for retirement can the effective date of the offer be extended? How many days, weeks or months extension will be allowed to accommodate employees wishing to retire?

Answer: Yes, the date can be extended if the employee has enough annual leave,.....an employee may use Annual Leave in order to stay on the rolls (even after the effective date of what would be separation) in order to establish initial eligibility for immediate retirement. The employee needs to "have" the annual leave in order to use it to stay on the rolls long enough to be eligible to retire.

5CFR 351.606 (b) states: Use of annual leave to reach initial eligibility for retirement or continuance of health benefits. (1) An agency shall make a temporary exception under this section to retain an employee who is being involuntarily separated under this part, and who elects to use annual leave to remain on the agency's rolls after the effective date the employee would otherwise have been separated by reduction in force, in order to establish initial eligibility for immediate retirement under 5 USC 8336 , 8412, or 8414, and/or to establish initial eligibility under 5 USC 8905 to continue health benefits coverage into retirement.

Q8. When will Official Personnel Files (OPFs) be available?

Answer:

If an employee requests his/her OPF, the CPAC can order the folders individually, at any time. It takes about 2-3 days for an individual OPF to come into the CPAC office. Employee will then need to come to the CPAC office to review the folder.

Also, your organization administrative office will be contacting you to review your Official Personnel File (OPF) to ensure that your file is accurate. The accuracy of your records is important and can affect how you are placed in the Reduction of Force (RIF) that will result from the CA Study. The OPF review process will consist of several opportunities; if you are interested, please ask your administrative office to forward your name to CPAC. Once the list of names are turned into CPAC, employees will be notified of available dates and times for them to review their OPF's. The OPF update process is described below.

OPF Update Process. Once you review your OPF, you can update your file at a later date by submitting an Optional Form (OF) 612 to CPAC and request that it be inserted into your records. The OF-612 is the preferred means of updating your experiences and training in your OPF. If an employee wants to update his/her OPF file, they should use an OF-612 Continuation Sheet. An electronic / MS Word version of the Continuation Sheet is available at each organization's administrative office as well as on the P-drive under the folder "USAG" and its sub-folder "Care". A blank sheet of paper can also be used as a continuation sheet. In addition, employees can use the software version of OF-612 (Federal Job Kit) at Army Community Services (ACS), the Detrick Center for Training and Education Excellence (DCTEE) and at your organization's administrative office. Training on using the OF-612 software and resume preparation is available by contacting Raquel Cajudo at x3-3315. The OF-612 (Federal Job Kit) may also be available on the Fort Detrick computer network; if installation is successful, we will notify the workforce.

In updating your OPF, you should use the OF-612 to document experience and training not listed in your file. This experience and training can be:

- Work not included on your current job description (your current job description should be listed in your OPF).
- Experience from jobs held prior to Federal service.
- Military experience.
- Experience from second jobs (e.g. part time employment, part time business, etc) that you now or previously performed.
- Training prior to and during Federal service.

If the job description that you are currently assigned is in the OPF, and accurately describes the duties you are performing, there would be no need to enter that experience on the OF-612. When reflecting experience on the OF-612, you should indicate the month and year you began and the month and year the work ended, and the number of hours per week performing this work. When reflecting training on the OF-612, include the course title, dates and duration of the training, and what the course covered.

Employees that may be interested in being placed through the RIF process in positions requiring licenses need to document possession of a current license by submitting a photocopy of both sides of the current license. A completed OF 612 must be attached to the front of the photocopy prior to submission.

It is okay to send a SF 171 or 172, but this form must be attached to an OF 612 with information such as name, date, etc. completed, and the following information entered on the OF 612: "See attached form."

If employees are applying for a job that requires an OF 612, they should use the OF-612 software or the Basic OF-612 form and the attached continuation sheet as needed and follow the directions on page content and/or page count limitations listed in the job announcement.

Q9. Is a videotape available of the State of Garrison for viewing at DIS?

Answer: The 22 August State of Garrison video tape has been forwarded to the DIS; to borrow the tape, contact either Dennis Kiser or Donna Taylor; or contact the CA Office at x6711 to reserve a copy.

Q10. After being accepted for a buy out, can that person choose when they wish to retire within a certain time period? Like 2 or 4 months later.

Answer. The USAG Commander (COL Ball) will establish the time-tables, to include when the employee will need to be off the rolls. The time-tables will be based on mission requirements and could be within one or two months of employee acceptance of the buy-out.

Q11. Can Garrison employees get a listing of private wage-scales used by contractors?

Answer: This information is listed in the CA Solicitation, which is located on the USAMRAA web site. You can assess the Solicitation by going to the following

address: <http://www-usamraa.army.mil/> Once you enter the web site, click on Products, then click on solicitations, click on Multi-functional Commercial Activities Study (A-76); then enter email address to register. The CA Office will also print-out this data and employees can request a hard copy by calling x3-6711. The CA Office will also forward an electronic copy to the CARE Team representatives for dissemination to the workforce.